







*CHRISTMAS*

## *The Hostage.*

BY WALTER DE LA MARE.

IN DEAD OF DARK to the starry North  
St. Nicholas drew near ;  
He had ranged the World this wintry night,  
His elk-bells jangling clear.  
Now bitter-worn with age was he,  
And weary of Mankind, for few  
Had shown him love or courtesy.

His sacks lay empty—all save one ;  
And this to his affright  
Stirred as he stooped with fingers numb,  
Ablaze with hoar-frost bright.  
Aghast he stood. Showed fumbling thumb,  
Small shoulder, a wing : What stowaway  
Was this, and whence was't come ?

And out there crept a lovely Thing—  
Half angel and half child :—  
“ I, youngest of all Heaven, am here,  
To be thy Joy,” he smiled.  
“ O Nicholas, our Master Christ  
Thy grief hath seen ; and He  
Hath bidden me come to keep His tryst,  
And bring His love to thee ;  
To serve thee well, and sing, Nowell,  
And thine own son to be.”





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